

Dear Pat. M.

This is the speech I delivered at commencement.
There are a few changes from the copy I sent to you.

C. Csuri

FALL QUARTER COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

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December 13, 1985

Today, I will not try to moralize and tell you what is important in life. I leave that to others. However, I will make a few personal comments about The Ohio State University (a little nostalgia), my personal development over 45 years at this institution and what I especially value about my job as a professor.

I entered OSU in 1940. I have been here forever and I feel as if I am part of the woodwork. With the exception of 3 years of military service during World War II, I never left the institution. I am in my 39th year as a faculty member. I have dealt with 11 departmental chairmen, 6 deans, 7 provosts and 4 presidents. OSU had about 14,000 students when I was a freshman. As we attended our classes, we often wore white shirts and occasionally a necktie. According to today's standards, the girls dressed like they were going to Sunday school. I had a crew cut hair style and I was very respectful of authority. In Columbus, trolley cars were our public transportation and cost \$.05. I knew one student who had a personal auto. There were obviously no parking garages. The Student Union building was a wooded area. In 1941, as a member of the football team, we traveled by train to play USC in Los Angeles. It was an incredible trip for someone who never traveled ten miles outside of Columbus, Ohio. When we played football, we wore leather helmets and high top shoes and there were no face masks. Incidentally we beat USC, 33-0. I had a wonderful

experience as a student-athlete but I discovered there was life after football.

I have been a witness to a great deal of change in this institution - from the simpler time of the early forties - until World War II - the fifties and confrontations about freedom of speech (the gag rule), many good friends left the institution, the sixties and seventies with the civil rights movement, the student riots and the Viet Nam war - to the issues today of minorities and women. The institution has also undergone dramatic change relative to how it governs itself. I am still undecided whether or not decision making is best handled by benevolent dictators or by committees.

At another level, many of the buildings on campus represent real people to me. Professor Hopkins (Hopkins Hall), my first painting teacher, was a very sophisticated and worldly man. Before he came to OSU he lived in Paris for twenty years. He knew Degas, Renoir, Matisse - had met Gauguin and Leger. Imagine - my teacher knew these great artists. I was truly in touch with history. Carolyn Bradley (Bradley Hall) was my watercolor teacher. Hoyt Sherman (Hoyt Sherman Gallery) was also my painting teacher. Professor French (French Field House) was involved with athletics and he encouraged me in my art work. I knew Dick Larkens (Larkens Athletic facility) Lynn St. John (St. John Arena), Ernie Biggs (Biggs Athletic facility), Howard Bevis (Bevis Hall), Dave Baker (Baker Systems) and Russell Means

(Means Hall). The man who created the statute of Oxley Thompson standing in front of the library, Professor Frey, was my sculpture teacher. I often wondered how in his sculpture he could work on a piece of marble for two years. I met John Bricker, Don Scott, Richard Meiling, Jesse Owens and James Rhodes and I know John Mount and Novice Fawcett.

In Hayes Hall, Roy Lichtenstein, the internationally famous artist and I as young faculty members, used to sit around and curse Picasso. We revered and admired Picasso but we felt that he had done everything and there was nothing left for us to do.

This institution is full of memories of bright and sensitive people who became a part of my environment and contributed greatly to my professional and personal growth. Within one square mile of each other, there are talented scientists, writers and poets, historians, artists, engineers, physicians, lawyers and more. Many of them share common goals with interests in basic research and culture. It is the diversity of this institution that made it possible for me to create a personal world that became a dynamic and meaningful one.

Eighteen years of my career as a faculty member were devoted to my development as an artist. I wanted to be original and famous like Picasso. After ten years of exhibiting my paintings in New York City, I gave up on my pursuit to become a famous artist. I was very conflicted about

whether I belonged in Columbus or in New York City. I was disappointed, frustrated and depressed with the New York scene. It was at this stage that I began to understand the potential The Ohio State University had for me. Through the encouragement of my wonderful wife, Lee, I began to view the institution differently. I was depressed because I was not the world famous artist by the time I was forty years of age. She advised me to stop fighting the institution, instead, make it work for me - exploit the available resources and the knowledge. Find something that turns you on, she said. Within several months I discovered a small project in computers and pattern recognition in the Department of Electrical Engineering that absolutely fascinated me. The idea that one could program computers to create pictures soon became an obsession to me. I sensed the potential of an entirely new universe, a new way of thinking about art. I might add that I was prepared for computer technology by an industrial engineering professor, living in this one square mile of space, who first introduced me to computers in 1955. I returned to the classroom to study computer programming and the basic mathematical concepts involved in computer graphics. 1965 - 1968 was a special time in my career because an entirely new field was emerging. There was no tradition and there were no rules and I was in a position to invent the technology for computers and art. The real struggle to establish fundamental ideas took place during those three years. It was a time of euphoria

and somehow I was able to anticipate the impact of advanced technology in art and society. The rest of my accomplishments in computer graphics are a matter of record.

As a professor, I can not resist the temptation to make some comparisons between my role as artist and computer scientist. It may make a point about the University and may illustrate how we can function in art and in science. As an artist, I was interested in different points of view about reality. I wanted to make a unique statement. Perhaps it was some new concept about space, color, nature or the juxtaposition of icons to create some sort of visual drama, satire or humor. One soon discovers that it is extremely difficult to develop original ideas. This becomes evident as one becomes familiar with the history of art. Every time you think the idea is new, the discovery is made that its already been done. Nevertheless, like many artists, I kept clinging to the notion that with a great deal of self knowledge and commitment one could make a unique statement. Perhaps there is considerable self deception involved and one needs to be compulsive or a little sick to pursue that line of work. However the pursuit of originality gives one a sense of purpose and often there can be a gratuitous value in the creative process itself.

As a computer scientist, I found the problem of basic research in terms of one's overall attitude to be similar to that of the artist. There are indeed a different set of

skills involved and the research issues are more narrowly focused. It is still difficult to develop unique solutions to complex problems. I suspect it helps to have the ability or the flexibility to turn a problem inside out or to ask "what if" questions about the nature of reality. A sense of the ridiculous is important. I also know that technical knowledge alone for both the artist and the scientist is not enough for innovation. A capacity to be creative and to deal with higher levels of abstraction is essential.

In both cases I was in the pursuit of knowledge and this process generates excitement and a sense of being alive which is personally meaningful. The new ideas, new concepts of structure which help me look at the world in unique ways makes a difference, especially as I can share this knowledge with a few people.

Besides creative problem solving and artistic expression, there is another very important reason why I like my job as a professor. What makes it special are the students. It is a wonderful experience to be able to interact with bright, inquiring minds - with people, such as yourselves, who have high aspirations and ideals - with people who have not learned about complexity which often leads to the status quo. Students have the courage to try and enthusiasm coupled with imagination and intelligence can make a difference for the better in our world. I wish you good luck as you move on to new goals. I am very privileged to be able to

work with many talented young people. It is the graduate students in Computer Science and Art Education who have contributed so much to my success. Two of them are here today as members of the graduating class, Ruedy Leeman and Chris Wedge. I hope you are as fortunate as I have been as a professor at The Ohio State University in finding a role in life that can have as much meaning for you. As you move on to a new phase of your lives, remember it's important to enjoy your work. If not, don't be afraid of change. Work should challenge you and give you a sense of purpose.